PERCEIVED STRESS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT CLIMATE: A STUDY OF INDIAN SERVICE SECTOR

A Synopsis

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INTRODUCTION

The most crucial resource for any organization is human resource and the behaviour of people at workplace is a strong determinant of individual as well as organizational outcome. A formal organization has organizational structure, which binds the human resources in certain hierarchical structure. These individuals in the organization have different goals and objectives to achieve thus it may lead to an obvious difference in their interest. Sometimes while attaining their self-objectives, interpersonal relationship among the employees get strained. The most complex interpersonal issues related to workplace are termed as employee dispute.

Generally the disputes are witnessed in manufacturing industry, however service industry is not free from employee's dispute. The disputes emerge from conflicts and if the conflicts are not managed well the employee's conflict lead to complaint, formal grievance and later turn into dispute. The term conflict means 'differences of opinion'. At workplace the difference of opinion would certainly exist among the workforce and among these, the constructive conflicts are encouraged, as they result in innovation in any organization. There are five different styles of managing conflict including being aggressive, assertive approach, compromising, accommodating and collaborating.

Though the application of conflict management style depends upon the individual's behaviour, their needs & requirements while interaction with others, the organizations must encourage an environment for managing conflict. The idea of a conflict management climate has gained increasing importance in recent years. Conflict management refers to the actions taken by individuals to resolve interpersonal conflics (Tjosvold, Wong, & Chen, 2014). Whereas Conflict Management climate (CMC) refers to the evaluation of the organisation's conflict management mechanisms and procedures by employees and how fair and predictable the relationships between leaders and supporters are considered to be in this regard. (Rivlin, 2002; Einarsen et al., 2018). The climate for managing conflict is created by the organizations and all the three aspects of behavioural studies at workplace i.e. individual, group and organizational level are responsible for implementing conflict management climate successfully.

In India the service sector organizations are increasingly struggling to deal with challenging business environment including competition in the market, innovation and offering customized solutions to the end users. In such competitive scenario, the employees are required to overstretch themselves to contribute better towards organizational outcomes. The demanding

nature of work and strained relationship create stress at workplace. It further exhausts an employee and force them to have poor employee engagement, job satisfaction, and low morale; and develop intention to leave the organization. The level of stress perceived by an employee differs among employees on the basis of their personality, work setting, interpersonal relations at workplace and many more. The perceived stress by the employees can contribute to the conflict management climate, however the evidences of the same are very limited. Along with it, different individual characteristics and organizational practices may also be responsible for creating a conflict management climate.

Perceived stress negatively influences an individual's productivity, effectiveness, and one's quality of work (Savery & Luk, 2001). Individuals with high levels of stress experience cognitive exhaustion, resulting in draining the energy of an individual that is necessary for task success (Chung et al. 2018). As a result, they are likely to underperform on tasks that require tolerance for irritation, accuracy, and the ability to minimise disruptions when people encounter stress. (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). The stressful working conditions reduces concentration level, increases the chances of errors and cause conflict at workplace. The climate for management of conflict supports the employees to deal with challenging interpersonal situations.

imilarly perceived organizational support and resilience of an employee would also help in dealing with the adverse effects of perceived stress and creating conflict management climate. Perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) refers to employees' overall beliefs regarding the degree to which an employer values employees, cares about their wellbeing, and supports their socio-emotional needs by providing resources to assist with managing a demand or role. Whereas the resilience is the ability of individuals to bounce back or to cope successfully despite adverse circumstances (Rutter et al., 2008). Resilience has been referred to as a personality trait (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein 2006, Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin 2003) and a dynamic process (Luthar 2006). A common theme in the varied definitions of resilience is strength and people who are described as resilient are said to be able to persist in overcoming challenging obstacles.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ma et al., (2008) studied to map the intellectual structure of conflict management studies, investigating the key themes, concepts, and their relationships of conflict management literature. Citation, co- citation analysis and social network analysis were used to trace the development path of conflict management research published between 1997 and 2006. The findings of the study concluded that conflict management literature focuses on three key themes including workplace conflict and conflict management styles, cultural differences in conflict management, and conflict management in practice.

Caputo et al., (2019), further updated the work done by Ma et al. (2008) by exploring the conflict management research between 2007- 2017 using bibliometric analysis to trace the development path of the extant literature. The study included activity indicators, such as distribution of articles and most-cited journals; relationship indicators, such as co-author analysis and keyword analysis, and the mapping of the theoretical foundations. The researchers identified five key themes that help to track the direction of conflict management research: negotiation, mediation, trust, conflict management styles, and performance.

P. Greeff et al., (2000) investigated correlation between conflict management with marital satisfaction. They also identified the way spousal satisfaction with marital conflict is managed along with gender differences. The results confirmed that the collaborative conflict management style has the highest correlation with both marital satisfaction and spousal satisfaction with conflict management in the marriage. In contrast, where one or both of the spouses used the competitive conflict management style, the lowest marital satisfaction was reported.

Chung (2018), investigated the mediating effect of perceived stress in the relationships between workplace ostracism and helping behavior, voicing behavior, and task performance. The study also investigated the moderating effect of psychological empowerment for the relationships between perceived stress and behavioural outcomes among the South Korean employee. The findings suggested that workplace ostracism is a stressor and psychological empowerment can mitigate the negative effects of stressor i.e. ostracism on behavioral outcomes.

Sommerville, J., & Langford, V. (1994) carried out a study on the construction project managers and analysed the relationship between occupational stress and conflict. They found about the perceived sources of stress and conflict within the construction industry. The resultant effects of

stress and conflict are discussed along with the variety of coping strategies adopted as conflict and stress busters. They concluded that there may be a link between stress and conflict. The persistence occurrence of occupational stress and conflict demands much management efforts and other resources to come to some sort of conclusion. Thus conflict management climate is necessary to exist.

Lanz, & Bruk- Lee (2017) examined the relative effects of interpersonal conflict and workload on job outcomes i.e. turnover intentions, burnout, injuries. The study further investigated whether resilience moderates the indirect effects of conflict and workload on job outcomes via job- related negative effect. The study was conducted on the nurses working in US. It was found that interpersonal conflict predicted turnover intentions and burnout; workload predicted injuries. Job- related negative affect mediated the relationships between stressors and job outcomes except for the direct effect of workload on injuries. Low resilience increased the magnitude of the indirect effects of conflict on job outcomes.

Ren & Kim (2017), a proposed structural equation model explaining how bullying experience, conflict management styles and psychological empowerment predict psychological well-being among chinese nursing students in clinical placement is related. The results of the study indicated that experience of being bullied during clinical placement, conflict management styles and psychological empowerment have significant effects on psychological well-being. It also concluded that conflict management styles and psychological empowerment mediates the association between bullying and psychological well-being. They also recommended that further research should incorporate conflict management climate and psychological empowerment into the specific intervention strategies for handling challenging work behaviors among employees at workplace.

Hartmann et al. (2020), mentioned that in increasingly dynamic business environment, the concept of resilience is fundamental to understanding how employees successfully handle adversity. The researchers studied the conceptualisations of resilience and highlighted the way resilience has been measured in extant quantitative work. They also conducted a systematic literature review of empirical work on the antecedents and outcomes of resilience at the individual and team levels, yet, the operationalization of the concept, the factors which lead to its development, and how and why it influences outcomes of interest to organisations are issues still under debate in the literature. The researchers also addressed these debates by undertaking a critical review of research on resilience in the workplace at both the individual and team levels.

RESEARCH GAP

1. Significant increase in research on conflict management; The intellectual structure of conflict management literature has received little attention in spite that a large number of studies have been done on conflict management Ma et al., (2008).
2. Two studies include extensive research on the concept of Conflict Management climate and include the studies from 1997-2017.
3. The studies on conflict management climate are limited in Indian context.
4. The research on group conflict and work performance has gained momentum in recent years (Ma et al., 2008)
5. There are lack of direct studies on the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate.
6. While understanding the human behaviour at workplace the studies are conducted at individual, group and organizational level.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the concept of Conflict Management climate?
2. What are different antecedents & Consequences of conflict management climate?
3. What is the type of relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate at workplace?
4. What is the role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate?
5. What is the role of resilience in the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the concept of conflict management climate
2. To study the antecedents of conflict management climate.
3. To study the consequences of conflict management climate.
4. To study the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate.
5. To find out the role of Perceived organizational support in the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate.
6. To find out the role of Resilience in the relationship between perceived stress and conflict management climate.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research will expose researchers to different practices to be adapted for dealing with conflict management in the presence of stressful working conditions.

This study will help scholars to improve their understanding of the evolution of conflict management studies and the direction that conflict management research is taking identifying available avenues for future research.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is a difference in the perception of respondents towards conflict management climate of the organization on the basis of industry

H2: There is a difference in the perception of respondents towards conflict management climate of the organization on the basis of gender

H3: There is a difference in the perception of respondents towards conflict management climate of the organization on the basis of agegroup

H4- Perceived Stress has negative relationship with conflict management climate.

H5- Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between Perceived Stress and conflict management climate.

H6- Resilience moderates the relationship between Perceived Stress and conflict management climate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a detailed action plan of systematic research procedure. It explains about the possible methods and steps to be taken in any proposed research studies and also about the research methods that are commonly used by researchers in their field of study. The research methodology, details out the path of formulating research problems, objective and present the plan of collecting data, analysing and finding out the results from the data obtained during the study period.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The presented research includes descriptive and causal research design in nature.

The descriptive research design is done to collect information about a particular phenomenon and present the same using descriptive statistical tools. Various tools and techniques used for descriptive study include mean, median, mode, and standard deviation.

The causal research design is used to understand the cause and effect relationship between any two or more variables. The causal research design is used for predictive purposes as well. This research design includes various statistical tools such as correlation, regression, structural equation modelling, mediation and moderation analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

Both the primary and secondary data collection techniques would be used for collecting relevant data for study.

Primary Data from service sector employees will be collected using validated instruments i.e. Questionnaires. Where secondary data collection would be done through published material in journals, magazines, websites and other research publications.

SAMPLING

For the purpose of primary data collection, through questionnaire, the sampling of respondents from a population is to be done. For the purpose of study the purposive sampling technique would be used.

The population of the study is service sector organizations operating in north India. The sampling unit of the study would include the respondents from IT industry, hospitality industry, retail industry and FMCG industry operating in North India.

INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

For the purpose of primary data collection, the validated instruments given below would be used

- Perceived Stress- 10 items scale given by Cohen *et al*., (1983).
- Conflict management climate- 04 items adapted from the Conflict Management Climate Scale regarding perceived fairness of dispute resolution in the organization (Rivlin, 2001; Einarsen et al., 2018).
- Perceived organizational support – 08 item scale developed by Eisenberger, *et al.*, (1997)
- Resilience- Brief Resilience Scale of 06 items developed by Smith's Brief Resilience Scale (2006)

STATISTICAL TOOLS

The study proposes to use the following statistical tools for data analysis purposes:

- Central tendency,
- Frequency distribution
- Standard Deviation
- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis
- Mediation analysis
- Moderation analysis

PROPOSED CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Objectives & research Methodology

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Chapter 4: Conflict Management: antecedents and consequences

Chapter 5: Analysis

Chapter 6: Findings and Conclusion

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